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Learning Opportunities for
Vulnerable Children and Youth: The
Teacher Matters!



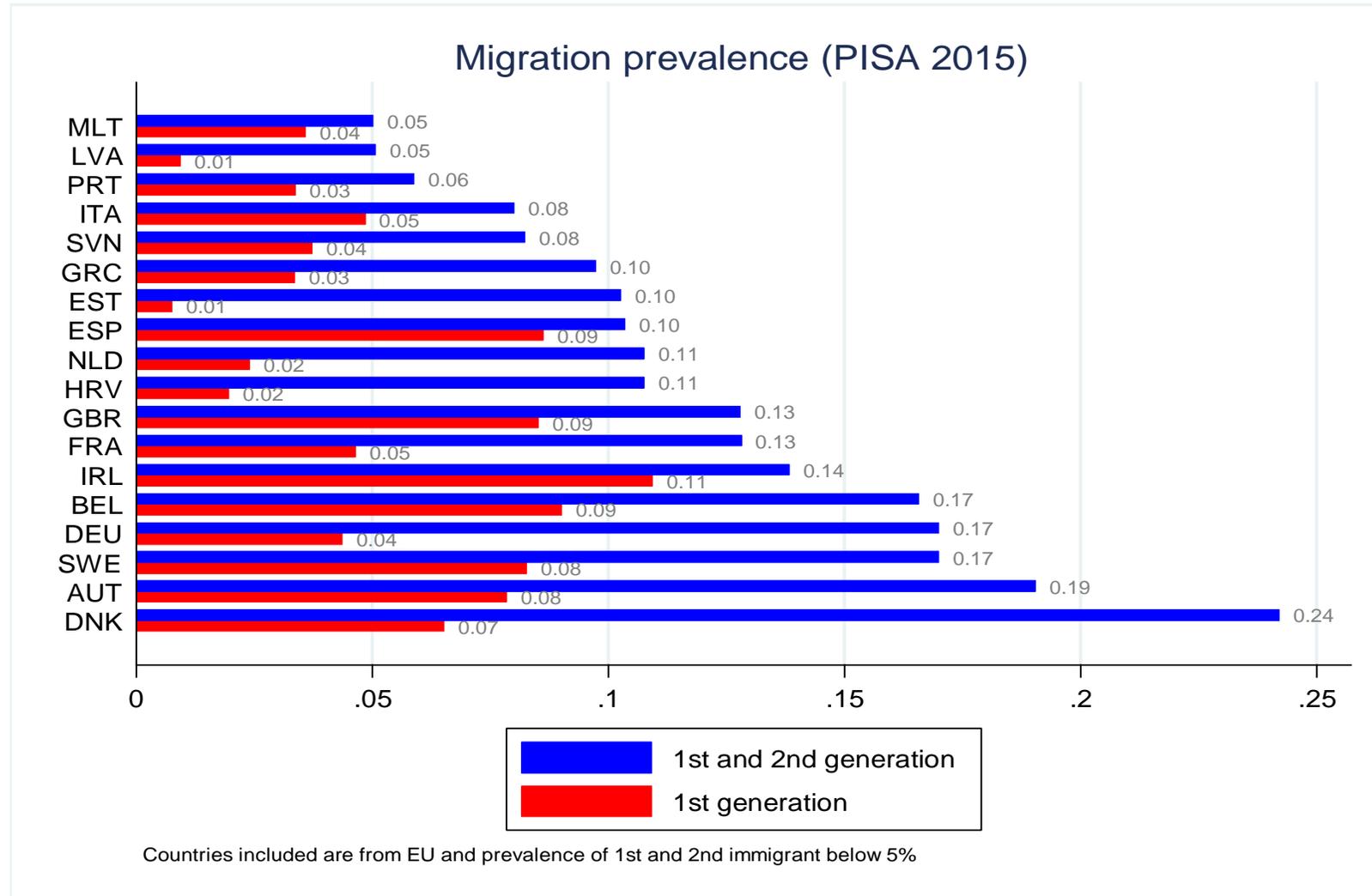
Diversified Student Population

As more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate 21st century classrooms, and efforts mount to identify effective methods to teach these students, the need for pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive intensifies. Today's classrooms require teachers to educate students varying in culture, language, abilities, and many other characteristics (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002) –

Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (2002). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (6th ed.). New York: Merrill.

Variation on prevalence of migration across EU

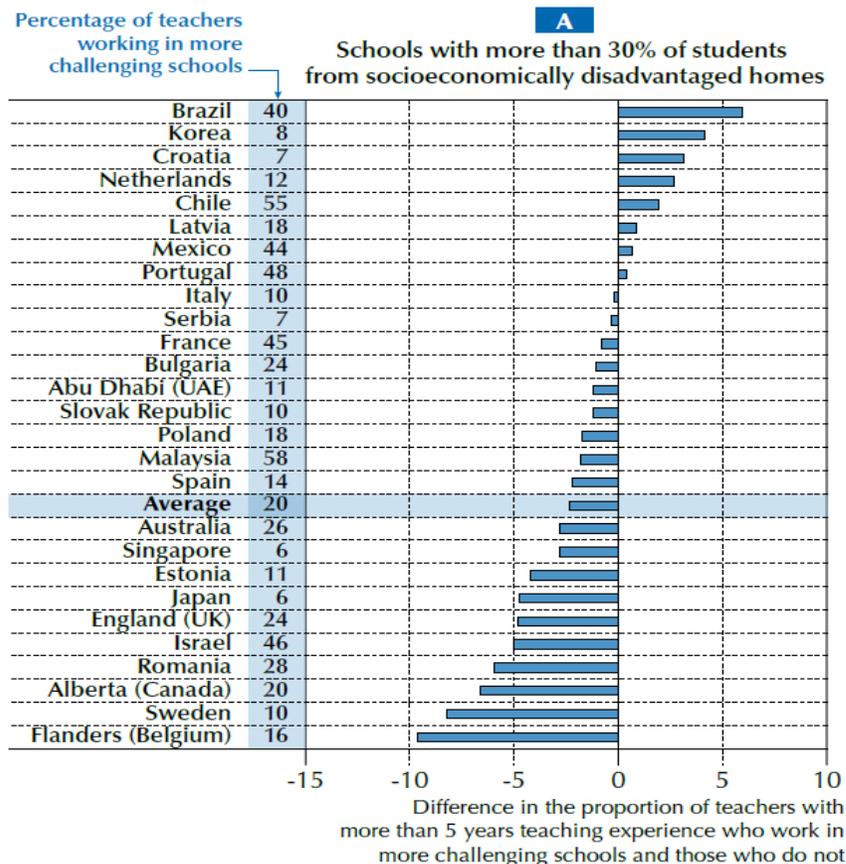
Belgium among countries with the highest 1st and 2nd generation migrants



The Changing Ecology of Classrooms in Europe

Schools in Europe are going to become more *socially, economically or ethnically diverse*; *classroom environments and instructional relationships will also become more challenging grounds, placing new demands that shape or constrain teachers' pedagogical choices* (Gardinier, 2012)

Some evidence from TALIS: who teaches disadvantaged children/youth?



- **Positive Difference:** Experienced teachers more likely to be working in more challenging schools than in less challenging schools in some countries (e.g. Brazil).
- **Negative Difference:** However, in most OECD countries, a larger proportion of more experienced teachers teach in less challenging schools compared to more challenging ones.

Belgium (Flanders):

- a larger proportion of more experienced teachers teach in less challenging schools compared to more challenging ones.

i.e. schools with larger proportions of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds

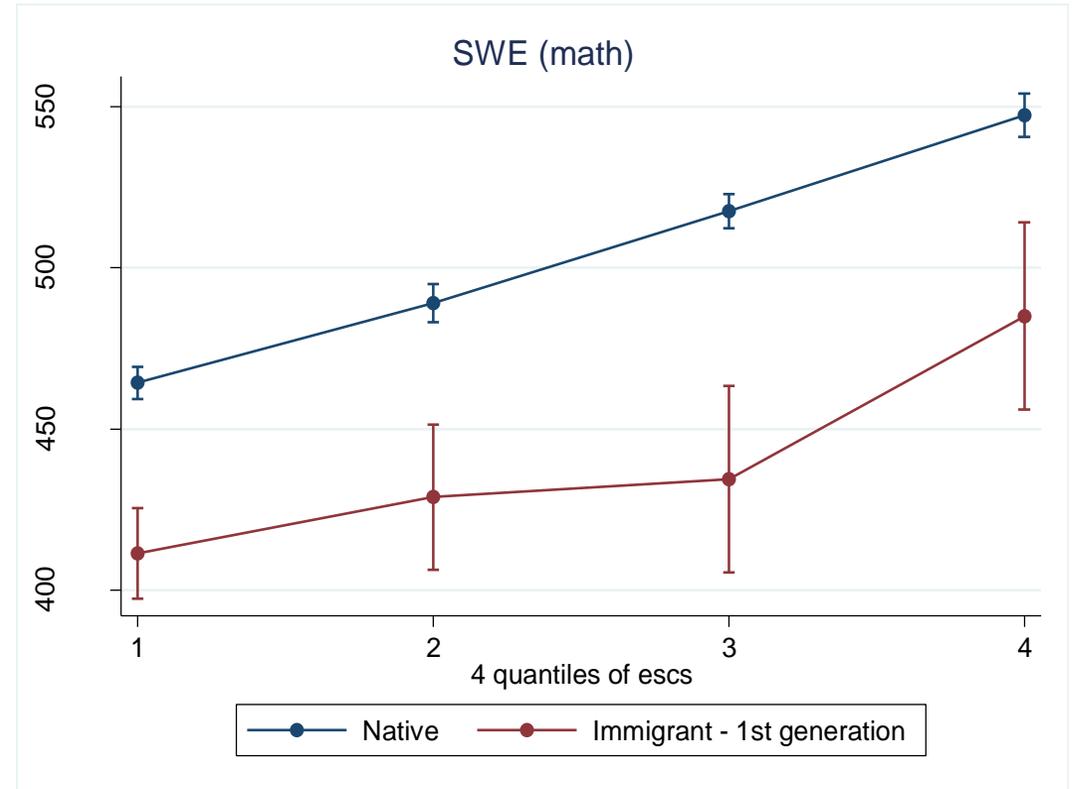
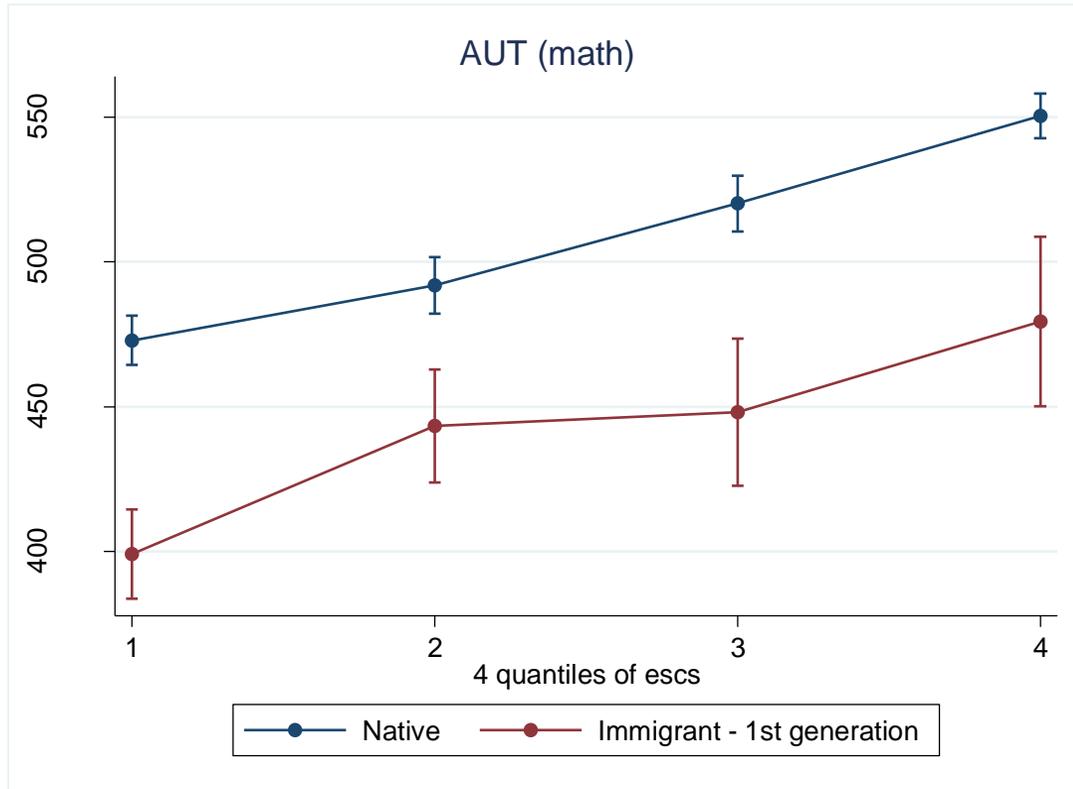
Learning crisis affects mostly students from disadvantaged backgrounds

- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds in many developing and developed countries have made the least progress in learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2013/14; OECD, 2010; OECD, 2015).
- The OECD's PISA data consistently show that students from poor or immigrant backgrounds lag behind their native counterparts, *even though they attend schools staffed by trained teachers.*

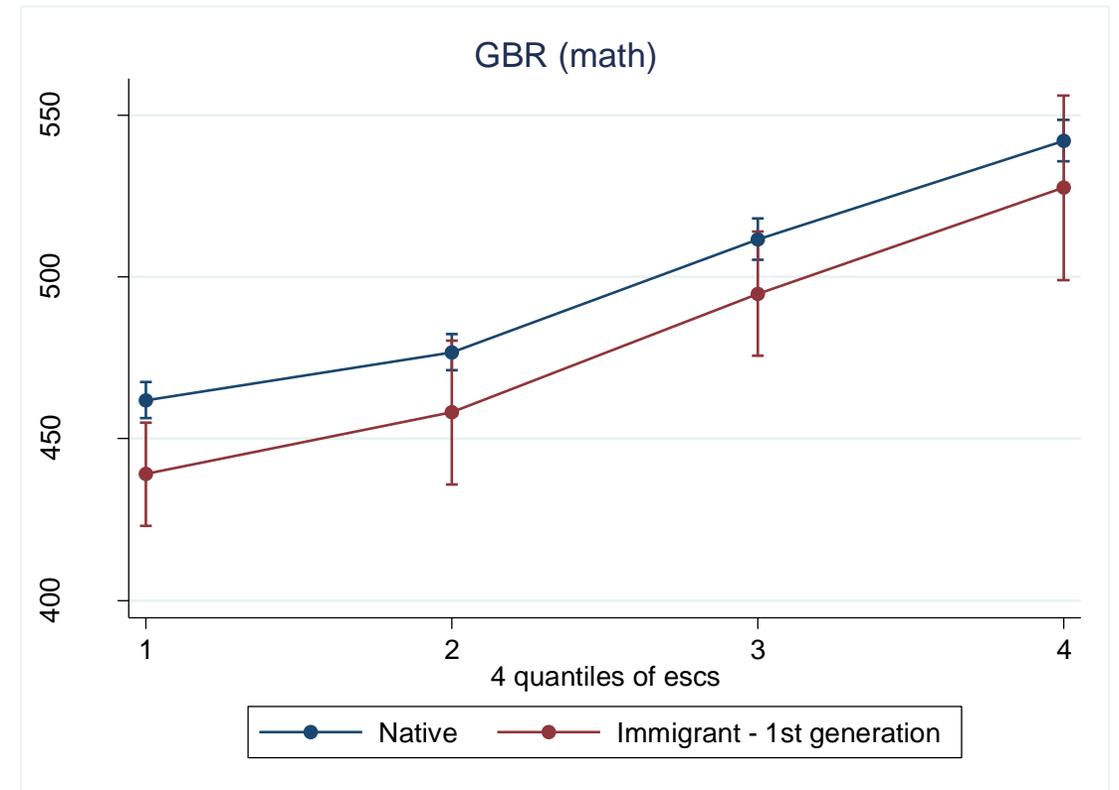
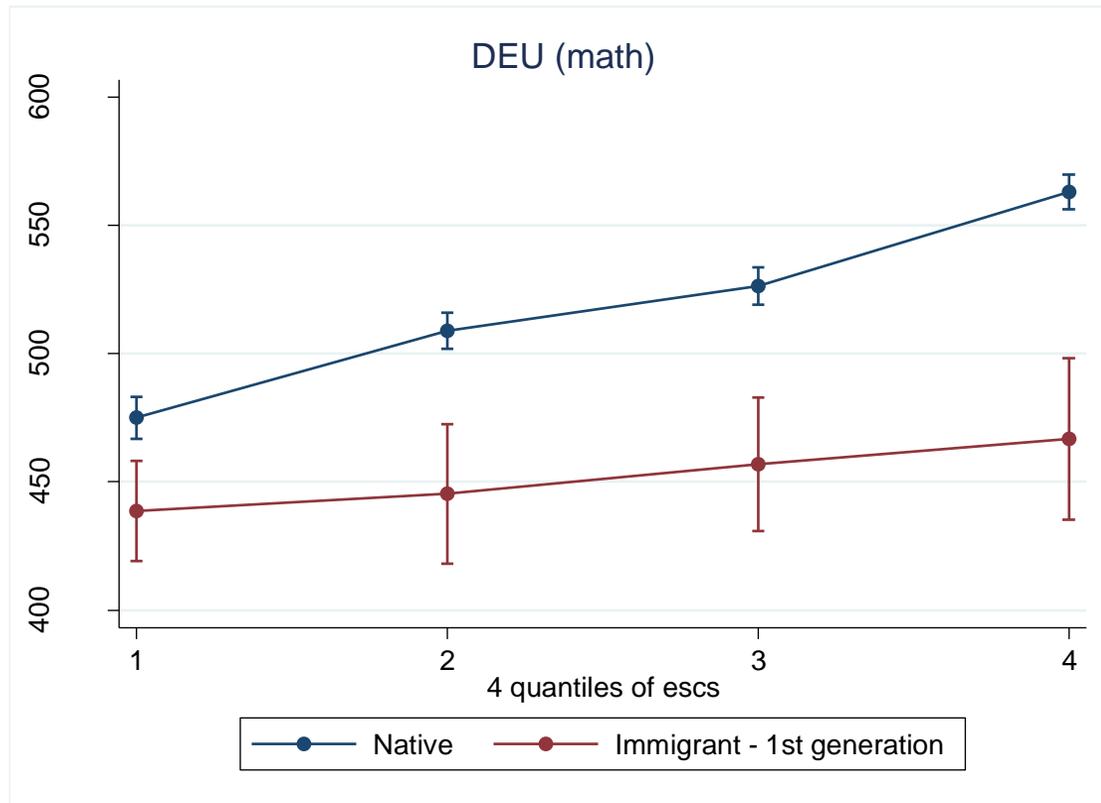
Wide gap in achievement between 1st generation migrants and native students

High variability in achievement among immigrant students than among native students

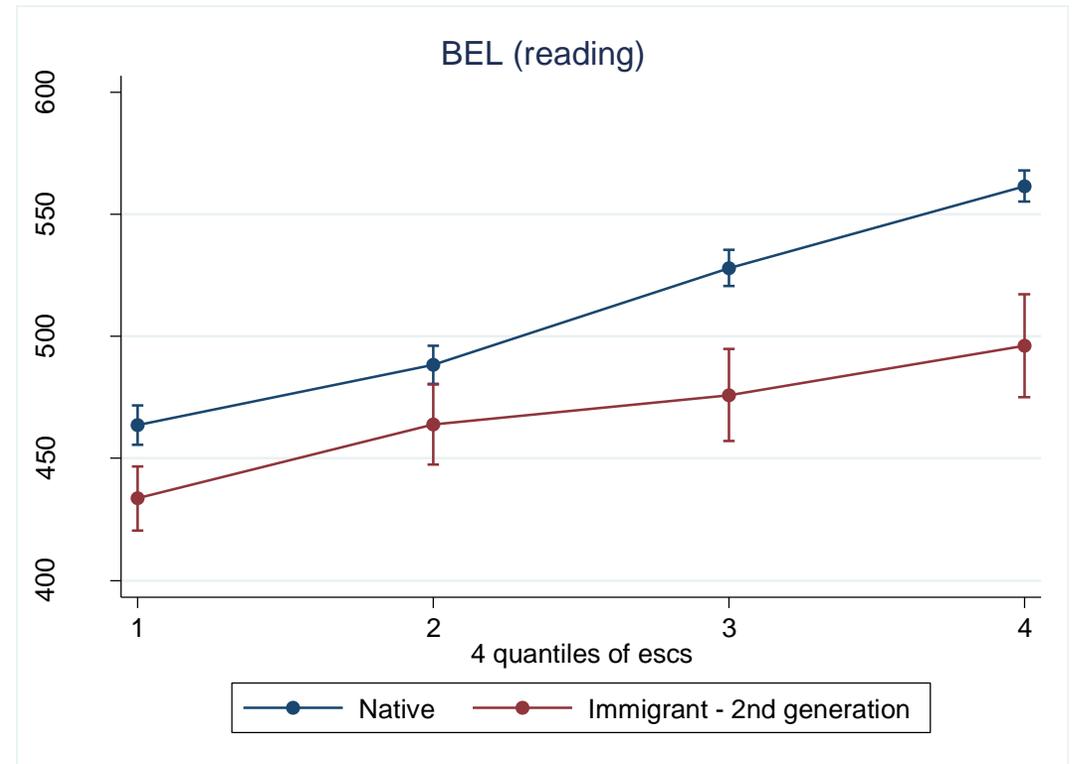
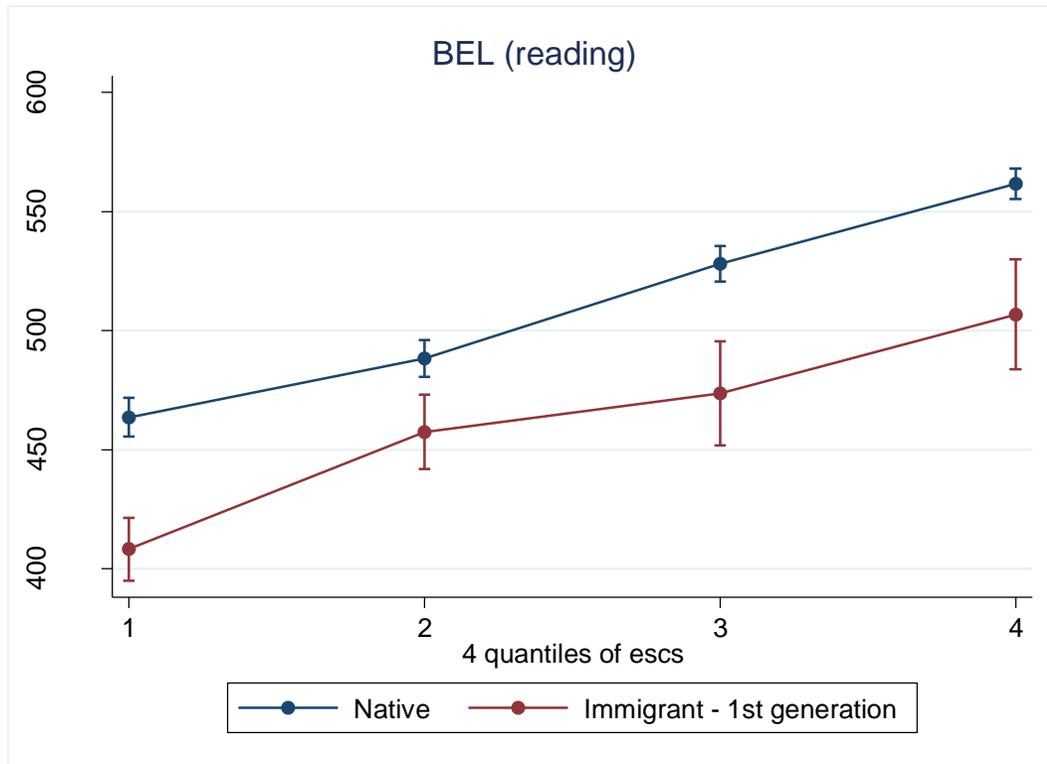
ESCS = the highest level of education of the student's parents, converted into years of schooling; the PISA index of family wealth; the PISA index of home educational resources; and the PISA index of possessions related to "classical" culture in the family home

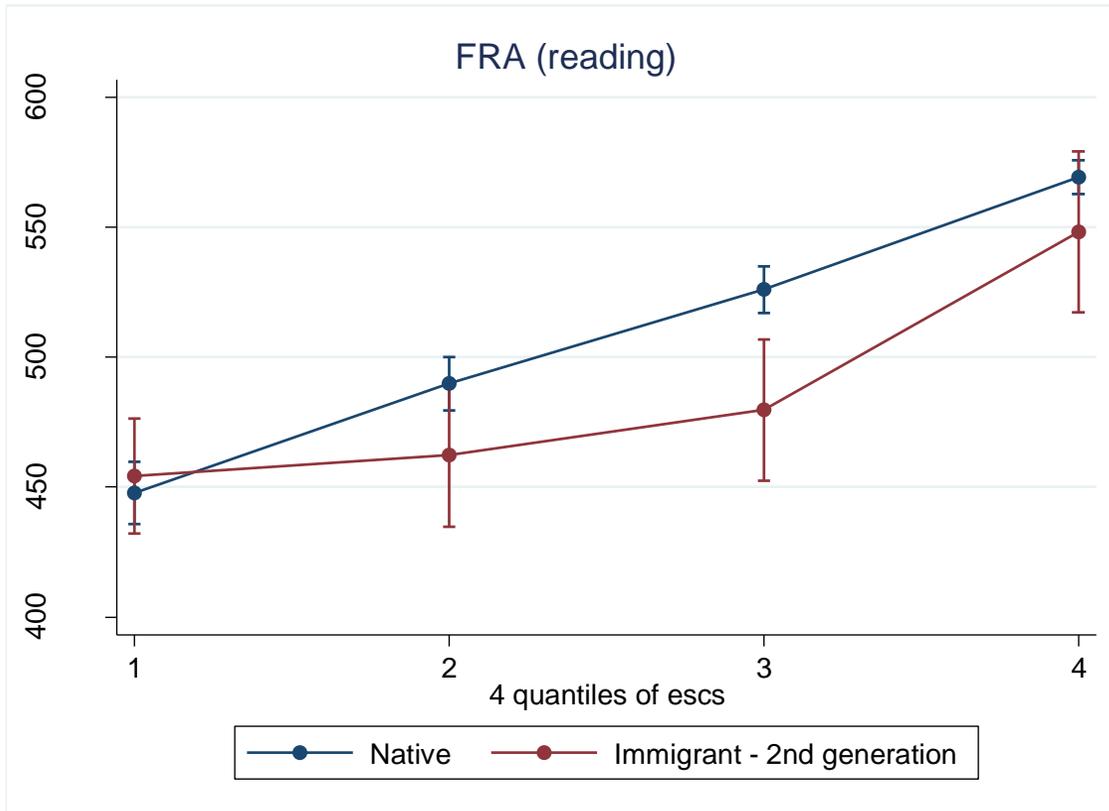


In Germany, **gap among the poorest** is smaller compared to other countries, In the GBR economic, social and cultural status drives inequality more than migration



1st generation migrants: the gap persists and widens; wider for the poorest; 2nd generation migrants: gap still persists





- In France, the poorest 2nd generation migrants do better than the poorest natives

Teachers lack preparation to deal with the challenges

Teachers in Europe on the whole do not feel adequately prepared to teach ethnically diverse classes (OECD, 2015; Blomeke, 2012).

So how should teacher education respond?

Rather than focusing on providing specialized programmes, or simply strengthening the pedagogical and subject-knowledge base of prospective teachers, ***we need a comprehensive approach that articulates a vision of learning to teach aimed at closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged groups.***

Evidence from systematic research

Suggests that students from diverse backgrounds are able to maximize their learning potential when they are taught by **teachers who are able to pay them sustained and inclusive attention, and in environments in which they feel safe, and draw on their backgrounds in the pedagogical discourse** (Westbrook et al.,2013).

Teachers' expectations matter!

- Teacher education has to ensure that all aspects of its programmes are tuned to work towards preparing teachers who are able to help disadvantaged students improve their learning.
- Raising the expectation in *all* teachers that they can make a positive difference is crucial.
- Low expectations of what teachers think they can or cannot achieve with some students often translates into low commitment to helping them overcome their learning difficulties or maximize their learning potential.

Inclusive Teacher Education for All

What I am advocating is for *all* teachers to develop capabilities that help to maximize learning opportunities and outcomes for all students, and that this should not be seen as a specialism for some teachers.

Also, teacher educators need to work collaboratively with student teachers and experienced teachers to create new expectations and expertise

“... Teacher educators’ approaches to teaching primary mathematics retain its didactic nature even when the aim is to teach learner-centered methods. Their vision of good teaching is not based on deep knowledge of what it is like to teach in primary schools *because it excludes knowledge derived from critical and reflective dialogue with pre-service teachers and mentors*. Instead, **it is drawn mainly from their university methods course, college textbooks and the experience of senior colleagues**. This usurps the intention of practicum which instead comes to stand for an opportunity to determine whether pre-service teachers have implemented the ‘innovative teaching methods’ as they were taught”. (Akyeampong 2017, p.)

Ten point strategy

1. **Develop teachers' capacity** to diagnose learning problems of disadvantaged students
2. **Provide opportunity for all teachers to learn to teach in disadvantaged schools** to improve their understanding of disadvantaged schools and students
3. **Develop professional learning communities** that can share knowledge and experience of teaching that improves learning for disadvantaged students
4. **Use action research** to build a knowledge base of what works (does not work) in improving learning opportunities for disadvantaged students and *why*

Ten point strategy

5. **Promote Inclusive pedagogy** – promote teaching approaches that are sensitive and can respond to learning needs of all student
6. **Create more choice** for how students learn and represent what they learn
7. **Promote dynamic learning groups** - for students to work in groups that are diverse
8. **Present teaching as a problem-solving activity** so that difficulties in learning are seen as a challenge, rather than as deficits in learners, so teachers develop strategies that are responsive to the challenge

Ten point strategy

- 9. Capitalize on diversity** to enrich the learning experience by using cases and examples that value difference
- 10. Create learning opportunities that stress collectivity as well as individuality** to accommodate and celebrate difference

Comments and Discussions